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Article

Secular New Zealand and Religious Diversity: From Cultural Evolution to Societal Affirmation

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Abstract
About a century ago New Zealand was a predominantly white Anglo-Saxon Christian nation, flavoured only by diversities of Christianity. A declining indigenous population (Maori) for the most part had been successfully converted as a result of 19th century missionary endeavour. In 2007, in response to increased presence of diverse religions, a national Statement on Religious Diversity was launched. During the last quarter of the 20th century the rise of immigrant communities, with their various cultures and religions, had contributed significantly to the changing demographic profile of religious affiliation. By early in the 21st century this diversity, together with issues of inter-communal and interreligious relations, all in the context of New Zealand being a secular society, needed to be addressed in some authoritative way. Being a secular country, the government keeps well clear of religion and expects religions to keep well clear of politics. This paper will outline relevant historical and demographic factors that set the scene for the Statement, which represents a key attempt at enhancing social inclusion with respect to contemporary religious diversity. The statement will be outlined and discussed, and other indicators of the way in which religious diversity is being received and attended to will be noted.

Keywords
Christian denominations; Christian missions; demographics; ethnic diversity; New Zealand; reception; religious diversity

Issue
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1. Introduction

Although prior to the late 18th century there was some sporadic encounter of European explorers with this distant land deep within the South Pacific, it was, to use King's phrase, "as the eighteenth century merged into the nineteenth" (King, 2003, p. 116) that saw the beginnings of European colonial settlement. In this context two religious cultures collided. On the one hand there was the religion of the indigenous inhabitants, the Maori, who "had always been a highly spiritual people" (King, 2003, p. 139) even though, at first, the culturally embedded nature of this spirituality meant some Europeans did not think, initially, that Maori had any religion as such (Irwin, 1984). On the other hand, the religion of the Europeans, Christianity, arrived on these shores initially in the form of two Protestant missionary movements (Anglican and Methodist), followed soon by a Catholic one (Marist). Only in later decades of the 19th century did settler Christianity arrive in earnest to re-shape the religious landscape. Throughout, as sociologist Hans Mol (1982) has noted, profound change occurred to Maori religious life and sensibility in the wake of European colonization and evangelization (see also Pratt, 2015). And whilst the incoming European religious culture has been referred to as a 'transplanted Christianity' (Davidson & Lineham, 1989), Mol rightly observes that the incoming Europe-

ans brought with them their own dissensions and disruptions: "migration to the other side of the world meant vast discontinuities with the past" (Mol, 1982, p. 1). If there was an expectation that colonisation and concomitant evangelisation would result in a homogenous society, the sociological and cultural reality was quite otherwise. In reality, even then, diversity ruled (Colless & Donovan, 1985).

Whilst, superficially, it could be said that there were two cultures—Maori and European (known colloquially as 'Pakeha')—and two religions, Maori and Christianity, in reality there was, and is, a diversity within and of Maori culture (Best, 1974) and a manifest variety of Christianities (Davidson, 1997). The arrival of European settlement brought with it the beginnings of the modern era of religious diversity. And although popular historical perception tends to elide this diversity—presuming but one homogenous form of Maori religiosity and one dominant (Western) form of Christianity (with at least a nod to the divide between Protestant and Catholic and perhaps an acknowledgement of Protestant denominationalism)—the fact of the matter is that diversity, at least within the dominant religion, was from the outset a major feature contributing to the cultural evolution of New Zealand as a modern secular state and society. As the nineteenth century progressed, and especially following the signing of a treaty between the British Crown and the Maori Chiefs (Orange, 1987), that diversity was extended with the arrival of other religions, further expanding and consolidating during the 20th century. This development has been largely within a context of liberal tolerance and acceptance of, albeit limited or constrained (cf. the history of immigration policies, for example), diversity—arguably a hallmark of what it is to be a secular society (Griffiths, 2011). At the same time, from the late 20th century on, changes in religious identity, demographics, and allegiances have seen a rise in non-religious identities and a concomitant contentious identification of 'being secular' with being 'non-religious' if not, in fact, signifying being 'anti-religion' as such.

Other than when caught up with the educational question as to whether and in what mode religion should be taught in schools (McGeorge & Snook, 1981; Turley & Martin, 1981), religion has not been a matter of deep interest or controversy in New Zealand in recent decades. Religious spats have certainly flared from time-to-time ever since free-thinkers, emerging new Church denominations, and other relatively fringe elements of Christianity accompanied the main Christian Church bodies to this far-flung British colony in the 19th century. But such dissensions, even when gaining publicity, were always matters internal to Christianity. Today New Zealand, as we shall see below, is one of the least overtly religious societies within the orbit of Western secular influence. It can be very hard for religion to get any kind of exposure in the media, unless it is for all the wrong reasons, such as paedophile priests or other forms of sexual misconduct and abuse. New Zealanders, I suggest, are arguably among the most studiously ignorant of religion; religion is a subject of discussion that is actively avoided and deemed better to ignore. As a result, misunderstanding and prejudice appears rampant.

In this paper I shall sketch the historical development of religious plurality since the 19th century—when Europeans, and so Christianity, arrived, settled and interacted with the indigenous Maori. I shall then outline the key demographic changes, with reference to census data, that demonstrate the nature and extent of a blossoming religious diversity, including the relationship between ethnic and religious diversities, together with a rising abjuring of religion that has become more prevalent in the last few decades and, with that, a challenge to what it means to be secular. I shall outline and discuss the National Statement on Religious Diversity and the reception it has received. Where has this statement come from, and what does it seek to assert and achieve? Finally, I shall review of a variety of other forms and avenues for engagement with religious diversity and offer some concluding remarks. Arguably, so far as social inclusion is concerned, it would appear that when it comes to religion New Zealand is happiest if religion is mute. But for some in this country, there are certain religions which they would rather not see included at all; and for others, religion as such should be a private matter only and not even on the agenda of social inclusion *per se*. How might this sit with the history and reality of religious diversity in New Zealand?

2. A History of Religious Diversity (I): Colonial Christianity

Prior to the arrival of Europeans in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, and with them missionary Christianity, the indigenous Maori followed their own primal religious traditions (Irwin, 1984). During the 19th century, missionary evangelical outreach and conversion among Maori, despite a relatively slow beginning, was on the whole quite successful. Christian missions began with the arrival of the Anglican Church Missionary Society (CMS) and its first missionary, Rev. Samuel Marsden (Davidson, 1997, pp. 8-10). Marsden came from Australia where his hospitality to Maori who visited him there garnered Maori protection and support to establish the first New Zealand mission. He conducted the first known formal service of worship, on a beach in the Bay of Islands (upper north of the North Island of the country), on Christmas Day 1814 and soon thereafter returned to his home in Sydney. By the time he came back to New Zealand in 1819 the CMS mission, which was premised on the principle of introducing 'civilisation' as the precursor to promoting Christianity,

was in serious trouble. It almost collapsed, but in 1823 relocated to a new location where it fared better. An important contribution to the study of Maori language was made, including work on a translation of the Bible. The first baptism of a Maori occurred in 1825. Anglican missionary outreach to Maori was well underway, and its legacy persists to this day.

The Rev Samuel Leigh, the first Wesleyan (Methodist) minister to Australia, began the New Zealand work of the Wesleyan Missionary Society (WMS), also in the north of the country, in 1822 (Davidson, 1997, p. 13). However this, too, proved a difficult beginning, with considerable tension between the local Maori community and the Mission station emerging. Interpersonal difficulties among the missionaries were also factors involved. The station was sacked by Maori in 1827 and the Wesleyans withdrew for a short while. Rather like the Anglicans, in 1828 they relocated and regrouped at a new site—on the Hokianga harbour on the western side of the upper North Island—and soon expanded from there. By 1830 scant missionary success could be recorded as it would appear there was little or no understanding of the real task. Physical, spiritual and psychological isolation took their toll and there was considerable difficulty in language acquisition. Methodist missionaries seemingly had little to offer the Maori. But the venture was not a total failure. Maori language (*Te Reo Maori*) was learned eventually by some; significant points of contact were gradually made between missionaries and Maori and, as with the Anglican missionary endeavour, such contacts and attendant relationships played a significant role in the emergence and signing of the *Treaty of Waitangi* (see New Zealand History, n.d.), the 1840 document that marked the commencement of New Zealand as a modern nation State governed by England—so making it part of the English colonial empire.

In January 1838 a French Catholic bishop, Jean Baptiste Pompallier (1807−1871), arrived in New Zealand together with two members of the Society of Mary (Marists), a newly formed French missionary order (Davidson, 1997, p. 16). The first Mass was celebrated on January 13 in a private home—just across the harbour from the Wesleyan Mission Station. Pompallier himself was able to preach in Maori only three months after his arrival. He also had to learn English. He urged his missionary priests to be sensitive to Maori customs, on the one hand, but also to attack 'Protestant errors' on the other. On the whole the approach of the Catholics was much more accommodating towards Maori life and customs than that of the other two Christian missions. But the Catholics had less to offer the Maori, by way of material benefits, than the Anglicans and Methodists with their emphasis on education, health, and agricultural technology. "Catholic missionaries opted for a life of poverty which had difficulty competing with the attractions of the Protestant missions"; however "without the demands of families and mission stations, [they] were often able to get closer to Maori than their Protestant counterparts" (Davidson, 1997, p. 16). More French Marists joined Pompallier who established his headquarters at the township of Russell in the Bay of Islands which, for a while, was the capital of the colony. There he set up a printing press to rival the Protestants.

As a result of these developments a twofold suspicion and animosity attached itself to the Catholic missionary endeavour, namely Protestant vs. Catholic rivalry (religious); and French vs. British rivalry (political). This played a part in the urgency with which the British concluded the 1840 Treaty with the Maori chiefs. New Zealand was henceforth ruled by Britain, but without an established Church. Although New Zealand was a predominantly Protestant society, Catholics nevertheless had a free hand to be about their own religious business, as did the many varieties of Protestant denomination and sects that attended the burgeoning arrival of settlers seeking a brave—and religiously free (i.e. allowing of diversity)—new world. Thus a distinctive development foreshadowing the emergence of a broader religious diversity emerged around the middle of the nineteenth century, namely a secular polity that gave freedom to, as well as from, religion under the law.

At this stage religious diversity was really a matter of Christian denominational variety. "The pluralistic nature of New Zealand settler society, with denominations having to exist alongside one another in a religious mix very different from England, was already beginning to determine the reaction of the people to religious issues" (Davidson, 1997, p. 30). No one Church had pride of place, constitutionally, over any other; although, by dint of being a British colony the Church of England, transplanted into the colony as a missionary endeavour, then servicing a settler community and undergirding a new society, emerged as the *de facto* national Church. The matter of establishing the Church in a colonial context involved transplanting not just religion as a set of beliefs and values, but also its institution(s), with accompanying customs, polity, and agendas.

By 1874 the Anglicans were institutionally organised as 'The Church of the Province of New Zealand'. For many years generations of New Zealanders would not know what 'religion' (Church) they belonged to, as they seldom darkened the door of any. But when pressed, as for example to record a religious identity at census time, even with an opt-out option many simply said 'C of E' (Church of England). They might not be active believers, but they knew whence they would be buried, and in the meantime where they were most likely to marry and have any children christened. One did not have to commit to being Anglican; it was part of the British culture which had stamped its imprint upon New Zealand. By contrast, one committed to virtually every other Church.

Whereas the CMS was an exclusively missionary organisation, and the colonial (settler) Anglican Church came later, the Methodist WMS saw itself as having a responsibility to minister to both Maori and Pakeha (European) from the outset. This, together with its strong emphasis on lay participation and local initiative, meant the transition to, even co-development of, a settler Church alongside Maori mission work was perhaps more easily achieved. However, other varieties of Methodism (for instance: Primitive Methodists, Bible Christians) which came out with the settler ships were concerned exclusively with ministry to the settler communities, and they remained legally tied to their English Churches of origin for a long time.

As for the Catholics, who initially made no formal distinction between missionary and settler work, incoming settler communities soon predominated in terms of demand. In particular the needs of the Irish Catholic settlers—including educational as well as spiritual and pastoral needs—came to the fore and required much energy and effort (King, 1997). Indeed, as Davidson (1997, p. 38) notes: "The distinctive French Marist influence on early New Zealand Catholicism was overtaken by the impact of the Irish settlers and the Irish priests and nuns who gave their own special character to Catholic identity in New Zealand".

Coming out of Scotland, Presbyterians began in New Zealand as a settler colonial Church. Presbyterian worship began formally in 1840 and the first Presbyterian Church was opened in 1844 in Wellington. A mission to Maori, despite an early failed attempt, was a secondary concern that was pursued nevertheless, but the primary focus was the Scottish settlers. And just as Methodism out of England was itself a diverse affair, so too was Scottish Presbyterianism—the 'Kirk' (Church of Scotland) was the established Church in Scotland, but in the 1840s ministers also came to New Zealand from the dissenting Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland, and both the clergy and a Lay Association of the Free Church of Scotland set their sights on Otago, in the lower South Island, establishing a settlement as a Free Church colony there in the 1840s. But the dream of an Antipodean Free Church theocracy was doomed from the outset: most of the settlers to the South were, in the end, English rather than Scots, with a good measure of Irish as well. The tide of secularism was also high in the new settler communities: they hadn't come half-way round the world to be dominated by pontificating parsons yet again. In the event, the discovery of gold in Otago-Southland in the 1860s put paid to the remnants of a dream for a religious utopia of the south. But an imprint and a heritage had been created: Otago-Southland for a long time had greater than 50% of the population identified as Presbyterian, and the Scots' emphasis on education bore fruit with the establishment of the first New Zealand University (now the University of Otago) in Dunedin in 1869.

Along with the arrival of members of the Church communities noted above, the 1840s and 1850s saw members of other smaller Christian Churches begin to arrive. Communities of Brethren, Baptists, Congregationalists, Quakers (Society of Friends), and the Salvation Army, together with their institutions, were late 19th century transplants. A distinctive New Zealand colonial religious (Christian) identity began to emerge. The idea that there should be an 'established Church' was widely resisted by virtually all. No one denomination was to be predominant. However, together with the reality of sectarian tension and religious bigotry, this resulted in a strong secular flavour in the political development of the country from colonial outpost to self-governed dominion.

3. A History of Religious Diversity (II): The World Comes to New Zealand

If Christianity was by far the predominant religion, it was not to remain in a wholly singular position for long (Donovan, 1996). By the late 19th century the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—which is another world religion, in reality an alternate Christianity, not another denomination as such—had been established and pursued a vigorous outreach into the Maori community as well as into the settler European communities. Census and other records also show a varying and relatively early presence of Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, Jewish and Sikh adherents. For the most part, numbers were so low as to vitiate the prospect of establishing their own religious communities, except for Jews who were able to have synagogues in the late 19th century in the capital city, Wellington, and also Auckland (Beaglehole & Levine, 1995; Gluckman, 1990).

By the late 19th century the religious landscape of New Zealand was one of Christian denominational diversity coupled with a smattering of other religions, and the decided flavour of Secularists and Freethinkers with, for the most part, an imported religious leadership (Stenhouse & Thomson, 2004). The quest to recruit and train colonial clergy was only in its infancy even quite late in the 19th century. However colonial Church architecture, as well as the distinctive use of timber, of which there was an abundance, made its mark quite early on. The legacy of this remains, even despite the combination of more modern approaches to Church buildings that emerged during the 20th century and, in the last couple of decades, the emergence of Middle Eastern and Asian architectural tropes with the erection of mosques, gurdwaras, and temples of various sorts.

4. New Zealand, Religion, and Secular Society

A very significant and far-reaching 19th century development was the Education Act of 1877. This declared

New Zealand to be a secular society in that the state would provide primary education that was "free and secular and compulsory" (King, 2003, p. 233). In response, the Churches for the most part initially backed a 'Bible in Schools' movement which, from 1879, agitated for the reading and teaching of the Bible in schools as an inherent element of culture and heritage. Sectarian division was, however, the Achilles' heel to any uniformity although, from 1895, the pattern of a negotiated half-an-hour per week teaching period during which, technically, a school would be 'closed'—that is, it would not during that period be operating as a state school—thus allowing volunteers from local Churches, very often clergy in the early days, to provide some form of Bible instruction. A point of contention then, and ever since, is that, for the most part, rather than meeting a cultural educational lacuna, the 'Bible in Schools' educational programme is often an agent for evangelical outreach. Much depends, especially today where it may be allowed—individual Boards of Trustees now determine whether or not to have the programme—, on the nature of the individual volunteer conducting the class and the choice of curriculum followed. Some are better than others; some more educationally appropriate, others clearly not.

The long-lasting legacy of this late 19th century development has been to obviate religion as a bona fide subject of educational study within the secular state system. The Catholic, Anglican, and Presbyterian Churches all developed their own private school systems to a greater (Catholic) or lesser degree. Smaller Churches, such as the Methodists, might have had one or two. Nowadays Jews and Muslims also have their own, as do some sectarian Christian Churches such as the Exclusive Brethren. Some religious education has ever been available for those who wish it, but its exclusion today from State primary and secondary education, together with its very late and limited appearance in the tertiary sector—now under significant threat—has had significant consequences for the prospect and quality of public debate about religious matters. The predominant cultural view has ever been that there are two subjects one never discusses in public—religion and politics. The latter may be allowable on some occasions; the former never—except when secular media and its supporting pundits go on the warpath against some aspect or other of religion or religious people.

During the 20th century the denominational diversity of Christianity consolidated and became institutionally established. Where initially there had been dependency on 'sending' authority, mostly out of England, in some cases Australia, independence of governance and identity was gradually gained. In 1907 New Zealand emerged from 19th century colonial status to being an independent Dominion of the British Empire. And where England went, as it did in 1914 (WWI) and again in 1939 (WWII), New Zealand would follow. But in the aftermath of the Second World War three factors emerged as highly significant for the religious landscape of New Zealand. First, the country itself moved from the status of a Dominion to being an autonomous member of the British Commonwealth. The ties to mother England loosened somewhat. And, in consequence, Christian denominational identity, whilst heading toward a post-War peak in terms of numerical strength and cultural influence, began also to self-question as a combination of war experience and the impact of Christian ecumenism was felt. The ecumenical movement flourished in New Zealand during the third quarter of the twentieth century to the extent that five Churches—Anglican, Presbyterian, Methodist, Congregationalist and Churches of Christ—entered formal negotiations to unite. However, despite a substantial expression of support from all sides, the failure of the Anglicans to carry a decisive vote saw their withdrawal in 1976. An attempt to proceed in the early 80s without the Anglicans also foundered; the ecumenical tide was on the turn.

Indeed, ecumenical energies were soon eclipsed by other cultural and demographic changes that had begun to impact New Zealand society, including a renaissance of Maori culture and language, and growing immigration with its attendant cultural and religious pluralities. These factors threw into sharp relief questions of national and Church identity. By the 1990s the country was officially bi-cultural (Maori and 'Pakeha'—meaning primarily European, but inclusive of all who are not Maori). The *Treaty of Waitangi* had been restored to its pivotal place of influence, and the major Churches which not so long ago had sought to 'become one' embarked, each in their own way, upon distinctively different bi-cultural journeys. But if diversity was somewhat dominated in the public and religious sphere by cultural duality, in reality this was already eclipsed by the upsurge in diverse races, cultures and religions that were arriving daily—whether as immigrants, or as refugees. Indeed, the 1987 Immigration Act ushered in a significant broadening of immigrant and refugee populations.

5. Demographic Developments: From Christian Predominance to Religious Diversity

By the late 20th century evidence from census data (Statistics New Zealand, various reports) suggest a close link between ethnic diversity and religious diversity. And, in more recent years, while the number of Christians has decreased, the numbers of believers of other faiths have increased. Although still a small percentage of the total population, they nevertheless are part of the changing religious landscape where diversity and not a relative homogeneity is the watchword. The recent (2013) census of the New Zealand population certainly produced some surprises, including that,

as compared to the 1906 census when 92.9% of the then population of slightly less than one million recorded as Christian, now only 45.1% of the population (4.2 million) so identified themselves.[1] Whilst in one hundred years the raw number of Christians has more than doubled, from c. 881,000 to c. 1,913,000; as a proportion of the total populace the Christian bloc has halved. But perhaps what is more significant in terms of comparison is that in 1956, out of a population of 2,174,062 there were about 1,906,650 Christians (87.7%). Thus over the whole of the past half century or so total numbers have barely increased (not by virtue of remaining static, rather by a process of increase then steady erosion) but the demographic proportion has declined dramatically. What changed? Basically, two things—and these are found elsewhere in many secular western societies—namely an increase in religiously diverse populations, and an increase in the numbers who eschew any particular religious identity. In New Zealand's case, 1906 saw some 4,768 persons (c. 0.5%) in total recorded as belonging to a religion other than Christianity, in 1956 it was 6,612 (c. 0.3%—a proportionate decline) but in 2013 this had become 245,223 (5.98%).

Clearly, at almost 6% other religions are not a major component of the population as such. Diversity is present but not obvious. Yet significant demographic shift and development has taken place over recent decades, and is set to continue. A process of demographic change is underway. And this has consequences for religious diversity. For example, whereas Zoroastrians went from only 4 persons in 1956 to 972 in 2013, Buddhists leapt from 111 to over 58,000 in the same period, and Sikhs likewise from 133 to 19,191. But the largest growth has been that of Hindu adherents who went from about 1600 in 1956, to around 17,500 in 1990 and just on 90,000 at the 2013 census. Muslim increase was from 200 (1956), to some 6000 (1990) and around 46,000 in 2013. Jews were around 3800 in 1956 and in 2013 are at 6867. But in 2013 two new categories were included: Spiritualism/New Age (18,285) and Maori religion (2,595). The category 'Maori religion' reflects developments within contemporary Maori culture either toward a secular position, especially in the case of many urbanised Maori (and most Maori today are of mixed race and culture), or toward an intentional attempt to recover elements of 'lost' Maori religion and so religious identity.

Overall, it is evident that religion in New Zealand is diversifying, but arguably such diversity was not the main factor contributing to the decline of the proportional share of Christianity. That is more directly attributed to the dramatic rise in the population of persons recorded as having no religion (1906 = 1,709; 1956 = 12,651; 2013 = 1,635,345). In half a century this category has moved from less than 1% of the population to over 38%. Add to that the two long-standing census categories concerning religion: 'Object to answering' and 'Not stated' (combined figures: 1906 = 2.8%; 1956 = 8.8%; 2013 = 12.3%) and the proportion of the population abjuring any religious identity is now sitting on 50%, and climbing. So, in broad terms, we might say roughly half the population is religious, and half not. But if the half that are religious in terms of the census were fully active and engaged in the life of faith, religious leaders would be rejoicing.

In point of fact census religious identity is not, and never has been, reflected in life-of-faith behaviours, and that has been a sociological reality for a long time. Nevertheless, the chief conclusion drawn from this cursory examination of demographic changes vis-à-vis religion is that New Zealand can be said to lead the world in terms of secularism—provided this term is understood in its popular usage as denoting non- or irreligion, and not in what I would regard as the more usual sociological sense of denoting social acceptance of religious diversity *per se* and a social policy of equal allowance and treatment of diverse religious identities (Dobbelcare, 2002). New Zealand is officially secular in this latter sense, but popular discourse often belies a tendency to equate 'secular society' as one where religion is absent from the public domain, if not from society absolutely. Although there is evidence to suggest census disavowal of religious identity cannot rule out a propensity to hold various supernatural beliefs, advocates of ideological secularism trumpet the decline of Christianity as a triumph for rational humanism, and sometimes not even that. However, it seems often they are puzzled, or blind to—or in some cases even fearful of—the rise of other religions. But that is another matter.

A useful comparison of religiosity, as measured by census returns that aggregate religious categories, alongside categories indicative on no religion, yields the following in respect of recent data (see Table 1).

Table 1. Census returns.

Country/Year	% religious	% no-religion
New Zealand 2013	51.1%	38.6%
Australia 2011	68.3%	22.3%
USA 2008	83.1%	16.1%
Canada 2011	76.5%	23.5%
UK 2011	67.7%	25.1%

Sources: Statistics New Zealand 2013 Census; Australia 2011 Census; US 2008 Pew Center Report; Pew Report of Canada's Religious Landscape, 2013; UK Office for National Statistics 2011 Census.

[1] The census data has been comparatively analysed by Dr. Todd Nachowitz (2007), whilst a PhD candidate in the Political Science and Public Policy programme of the School of Social Sciences at the University of Waikato. I am grateful to Dr. Nachowitz for allowing me free access and use of his material.

Along with a rise in those declaring no-religion, New Zealand has seen a steady numerical decline of those identifying as Christian since the post-WWII peak in the late 50s and early 60s.

6. Ethnic Diversity and Religious Affiliation

As indicated by an analysis of census data, a distinct correlation exists between ethnic diversity and religious affiliation. Europeans constituted 93.7% of the population in 1906. Half a century later the change was miniscule—Europeans were still 92.7%. But in 2013 a considerable change is registered with Europeans now at 74.2%. Still a majority, but a significant decline nonetheless. Maori figures at the same points are 5%, 6.3% and 14.9%, respectively.[2] All others combined hovered around 1% until well into the 20th century when changes due to immigration took hold. In 2013, peoples of Pacific Island origins made up 7.4% of the population, the category of 'Asian' came in at just under 12% and all others combined at just on 3%. Of the nearly half million Asians recorded, Chinese comprise approx. 35% and Indians approx. 33%. The 2013 Census shows a correlation between ethnicity and religious affiliation as follows:

- European—Christian: 47.4%; no religion 45.7%; other religions less than 0.50% ea
- Maori—Christian: 46.1%; no religion 44%; other religions less than 0.40% ea
- Pacific—Christian: 73.8%; no religion 16.6%; other religions less than 0.70% ea
- Asian—Buddhist 9.4%; Christian 28.6%; Hindu 18%; Muslim 6%; no religion 29.4%

This is but a snap-shot, not a full picture. But it is sufficient to indicate the nature of the changes to religious diversity that are currently taking place, and will continue to do so as the demographic profile modifies further due to immigration, which is a function not only of policy but also of specific links the country has to the Pacific Islands, and also to Asian countries, especially China—with whom New Zealand was the first Western nation to sign a free trade agreement. In consequence, it is clear there will be significant implications for religious diversity as a direct result of on-going changes to the ethnic composition of the society.

7. The National Religious Diversity Statement

A project of the New Zealand Diversity Action Programme of the New Zealand Human Rights' Commission (HRC), supported by Victoria University of Wellington and the Ministry of Social Development, the 'Religious Diversity in New Zealand' document which was launched in 2007 seeks to provide a basis for raising awareness and promoting ongoing discussion of contemporary religious plurality in the country. It also aims to articulate aspirational ideals for the guidance of the wider community in matters of religion. It sets out a number of principles which are grounded in international human rights treaties and the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act. These include freedom of religion, conscience, and belief; freedom of expression; the right to safety and security; the right to reasonable accommodation of diverse religious practices in various settings.

The Statement has been endorsed by a wide range of faith communities and leaders as well as many citizens, of various religious persuasions, who wish to see a better public climate for the acceptance and discussion of religion within society. Many individuals endorsed, supported, and even contributed to the development of the Statement. It is largely regarded as representing a positive step in promoting better awareness and acceptance of religious diversity beyond the simple ethic of tolerance that has long been characteristic of New Zealand's social mores. And today this ethic, in the glare of hostile light trained upon the global hotspots of religious extremism, is under threat. From a post-WWII period when there was a climate of tolerance and liberal acceptance that often undergirded interest in the 'other', whether cultural, religious, or both, there is now an increasing xenophobia and reaction to the suspicion of a hostile other—as seen, for instance, in the current global phenomenon of Islamophobia. These are major factors which the Statement seeks to address, among others.

Early in the 21st century many western secular governments, previously none too concerned with their religious constituency so long as the peace was not disturbed, began, in the aftermath of 9/11, to address both counter-terrorism and the promotion of religious harmony as a matter of new social policy. Although being intensely secular in the sense that, apart from the daily prayer which opens the proceedings of parliament when in session, government in New Zealand has nothing to do with religion. It is a private matter for citizens to pursue as they see fit. Nevertheless the New Zealand government in 2004 joined with a number of other governments in the Southeast Asia and South Pacific region to meet more or less annually

[2] There are few, if any, full-blood Maori. Racial intermingling has been very widespread. However, by law, a person who can claim even one Maori in their ancestral lineage may register as Maori. Further, Maori culture has a strong communal dimension: being Maori means having a place of belonging not only within an immediate family (*whanau*) but also a wider familial group (*hapu*), and through that, affiliation to a sub-tribe and/or major tribe (*iwi*). It is tribes who have settled disputes and grievances with the Crown, arising from 19th century land confiscations and other abuses, upon which compensation has been settled in the order of millions of dollars in land and cash. Being identified as Maori no longer attracts the opprobrium it once did.

for a formal regional interfaith dialogue (Bouma, Ling, & Pratt, 2010). The emerging globalised expressions of a religiously motivated terrorism were brought closer to home by the Bali bombing in 2005, and perhaps even more so by the London bombings that same year—many more New Zealanders are familiar with the London Underground than they are with Balinese beaches. Thus wider political initiative and interaction sparked the awareness that something was needed at a local (national) level.

Indeed, the idea for a national statement concerning religious diversity grew directly from the New Zealand delegation that attended the first regional interfaith dialogue in Yogyakarta, Indonesia (the Asia-Pacific Dialogue on Interfaith Cooperation) in 2004. In effect, the proposal to create such a statement constituted part of the New Zealand response to concerns that interfaith harmony, as a tool of counter-radicalization, ought to be something of a political priority within the countries of the region.

As it happened, with the facilitative support of the Human Rights Commission and led by Professor Paul Morris of the Religious Studies Department at Victoria University, Wellington, the Statement was developed between 2004 and 2007. Morris had attended the first regional interfaith forum as a member of the New Zealand delegation. A public consultative process was pursued, together with the involvement of an ad hoc multi-faith reference group convened in Wellington, to draw up an initial draft.[3] As a product of that process, the statement was first published in 2007 with a print-run of 10,000 funded by New Zealand National Commission for UNESCO. It was soon endorsed by a wide range of faith communities and leaders and a second, revised, edition was published in 2009 in English and nine other languages.[4]

Four chief reasons (*Statement on Religious Diversity in Aotearoa New Zealand*, 2009, p. 5) underlying the Statement are given, namely the perceived need for a wide-ranging public discussion about religious diversity as such; the reality of instances of religious discrimination drawing attention to the need for awareness of religious rights, especially regarding minority groups; a recognition that increased religious diversity was impacting on many aspects of social and cultural life and in some cases resulting in discord, even violence—most typically the occasional assault on an individual; most dramatically the firebombing of a mosque in 1998, although for most the reference to religious violence is elsewhere, overseas; and the need for a succinct resource to which people may turn for some initial information and guidance.

In a society such as New Zealand, where the very consciousness of the presence of religion can disrupt and disturb the secular presumption of the absence of religion from public life, the Statement provides a basis for discussion of and about religious diversity. It affirms that the State seeks to treat all faith communities and those who profess no religion equally before the law. Following a Foreword from the Prime Minister, the booklet carrying the Statement comprises an Introduction followed by the eight clauses of the Statement. A note on the origins of the Statement, a succinct yet detailed commentary on the each of the clauses, acknowledgements and endorsements recorded at the time of printing, are also included.

The Introduction (*Statement on Religious Diversity in Aotearoa New Zealand*, 2009, p. 2) states quite straightforwardly that "New Zealand is a country of many faiths, with a significant minority who profess no religion. Increasing religious diversity is a significant feature of public life". The foundation for affirming this diversity is implied in an assurance, given by Governor Hobson, at the time of the signing of the 1840 *Treaty of Waitangi* between the Crown and the Maori Chiefs: "the several faiths (beliefs) of England, of the Wesleyans, of Rome, and also Māori custom shall alike be protected". The role the Christian religion has played, and continues to do so, with respect to the development of the overarching national "identity, culture, beliefs, institutions and values," is acknowledged (*Statement on Religious Diversity in Aotearoa New Zealand*, 2009, p. 2). Nevertheless, demographic change as a result of recent immigration is recognised to now be a driver of religious diversity: "It is in this context that we recognise the right to religion and the responsibilities of religious communities."

Furthermore, the Introduction situates the affirmation of diversity within the context of Human Rights and the fact New Zealand is a signatory to a number of international treaties, including the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, which uphold the right to freedom of religion and belief. This includes the right to *hold* a belief; the right to *change* one's religion or belief; the right to *express* one's religion or belief and the right *not to hold* a belief. These are reflected in the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act and Human Rights Act, enacted in 1990 and 1993 respectively. The point is made that the right to religion entails affording this right to others and not infringing their human rights in respect to religious identity.

The eight clauses of the statement on religious diversity are as follows:

1. The State and Religion: *The State seeks to treat all faith communities and those who profess no religion equally before the law. New Zealand has no official or established religion.*

[3] The Statement is obtainable as a downloadable pdf from the Commission website: www.hrc.co.nz

[4] These languages are: Arabic, Chinese, Gujarat, Hindi, Korean, Maori, Punjabi, Tongan and Samoan.

2. The Right to Religion: *New Zealand upholds the right to freedom of religion and belief and the right to freedom from discrimination on the grounds of religious or other belief.*
3. The Right to Safety: *Faith communities and their members have a right to safety and security.*
4. The Right of Freedom of Expression: *The right to freedom of expression and freedom of the media are vital for democracy but should be exercised with responsibility.*
5. Recognition and Accommodation: *Reasonable steps should be taken in educational and work environments and in the delivery of public services to recognise and accommodate diverse religious beliefs and practices.*
6. Education: *Schools should teach an understanding of different religious and spiritual traditions in a manner that reflects the diversity of their national and local community.*
7. Religious Differences: *Debate and disagreement about religious beliefs will occur but must be exercised within the rule of law and without resort to violence.*
8. Cooperation and Understanding: *Government and faith communities have a responsibility to build and maintain positive relationships with each other, and to promote mutual respect and understanding.*

The Statement includes a commentary expanding on each clause. Some of the key points are as follows:

1. The State and Religion. The history of religion and religious diversity in New Zealand, beginning with the variety of Christian denominations and the accommodation of non-religious perspectives in "perfect political equality" is noted (*Statement on Religious Diversity in Aotearoa New Zealand*, 2009, p. 7) and attention drawn to the context of there being neither a strict constitutional demarcation nor the presence of a state religion; the country is, in effect, religiously neutral *qua* State, though historically—and until recently—dominantly Christian so far as the population is concerned.
2. The Right to Religion. Human rights legislation and norms are alluded to with specific mention of "the right not to be discriminated against on the basis of religion of other non-religious ethical beliefs" (*Statement on Religious Diversity in Aotearoa New Zealand*, 2009, p. 7).
3. The Right to Safety. In a context where there are occasional outbursts of vandalism of religious property and abuse directed to persons of faith, the right to be safe, in terms of both persons and property, is upheld. And this includes "the broader sense of being secure in being different" (*Statement on Religious Diversity in Aotearoa New Zealand*, 2009, p. 7).
4. The Right to Freedom of Expression. The importance to a democratic state of freedom of expression and of the media is acknowledged along with the need for these to be exercised in a responsible manner, both with "the right to religious expression and the right to express views about religion" (*Statement on Religious Diversity in Aotearoa New Zealand*, 2009, p. 8).
5. Recognition and Accommodation. The motif of "reasonableness" applied here is directly referenced to existing legislation. It goes to the heart of a positive apprehension of religious diversity within wider society: customs and practices that express the identity and life of those who are ethnically and religiously different need to be allowed for, and this includes "different dress codes and schedules and calendars for prayer and holy days" (*Statement on Religious Diversity in Aotearoa New Zealand*, 2009, p. 8).
6. Education. The nature of the history of secular education in New Zealand is noted, and a strong emphasis is placed on the need for genuine education about religion and religions, especially in a context of increased diversity and tensions arising from that diversity largely based on ignorance and suspicion. It is also noted that some of the best such educational programmes are found in Roman Catholic and Anglican integrated schools. Ironically, it is the education of some religiously confessional schools that serves the interests of the study of religion in a way completely lacking within the State school system.
7. Religious Differences. The potential for difference to lead to dissension is recognised, with the caveat that tensions arising from a clash of deeply held different, especially conflicting, beliefs and perspectives need to be managed within the law.
8. Cooperation and Understanding. Responsibilities accompany rights: the desire to live in peaceful mutuality of respect requires to be worked at. This is a duty resting on social, cultural and political institutions and individuals alike.

There is, of course, little in the statement that is new *per se*, or otherwise not to be found in existing legislation. However, as the Statement itself notes, its intention is to be aspirational; to focus attention upon religious diversity as such and so provide a platform for addressing issues that may from time to time arise from the fact of this diversity. It is a bold attempt at a public statement about religion in a society whose

dominant and unexamined public understanding of 'being secular' would seem to amount to 'ignoring religion'. Certainly this is the case with the secular press: it is not that it is 'secular' in the sense it is not owned by a religious body; its very secularity is a stance taken that is a priori dismissive of matters religious—unless, being contentious, they either bring religion into disrepute, or else confirm religion as belonging to the realm of the ridiculous. Thus attempts to gain media interest in and exposure of such a positive development as suggested by even the fact of the statement—let alone some good developments since, as noted below—have been singularly unsuccessful.

8. Reception of the Statement

The Statement was first presented at the National Interfaith Forum held in Hamilton, New Zealand, in February 2007. This gathering, comprising interested individuals—it is not in any sense formally representative of religious communities as such—endorsed the Statement and urged communities to engage with it as a means of promoting dialogue and understanding. Subsequent to that event, the formal launch by the Prime Minister, Helen Clark, occurred at the *Asia Pacific Regional Dialogue on Interfaith Cooperation*. This May 2007 event was a meeting of the Southeast Asia and Pacific annual Regional Interfaith Dialogue Forum that had begun in 2004 (Pratt, 2010b).

Although widely received and attracting formal endorsement from Church and other faith community leaders, there was early strident opposition from some Christian quarters—broadly speaking, those who might be identified as 'evangelical-conservative' or simply 'right-wing' Christians. In other words, the very inception of the Statement attracted resistance from some Christians, among them the ultra-conservative Destiny Church, which did not wish to admit the acceptance of religious diversity. It wanted instead to promote the notion that New Zealand is exclusively a Christian country. Brian Tamaki, the self-appointed 'Bishop' leading this Church, proclaimed opposition to any promotion of religious diversity in New Zealand. Although resiling from advocating the outright expulsion of other religions, he nonetheless asserted that "alternative or foreign religions" should "not be afforded equal status" with Christianity. Tamaki represented an extreme conservative view that identifies "opening the door to a diversity of religions" with "dismantling our own Christian heritage" (New Zealand Herald, 2007).

This was not unlike similar exclusivist resistance to religious diversity as experienced in Australia (Bouma, 2012, 2013). Closer Economic Relations (CER) protocols between Australia and New Zealand, and other bilateral arrangements, are not the only forms of cultural connections that link these two countries—otherwise separated by over 1200 miles of ocean, as well as very different colonial histories and governmental arrangements. In the case of religion, many contemporary conservative evangelical Christian Churches and organisations enjoy trans-Tasman links and exchanges of personnel with the result of that there can be found similarities of religious outlook and theology. But resistance to a statement affirming of religious diversity was not just found in certain right-wing Christian quarters. It was also objected to by secular humanists, mostly by way of letters to the editor in local newspapers, who did not wish to see any apparent privileging of religion as such. Clearly, in differing ways, such a statement hit a raw nerve.

With a measure of support from some other conservative Christians for whom also the notion that New Zealand is not, officially, a Christian country was both novel and objectionable, Destiny Church New Zealand staged a demonstration outside the May 2007 Waitangi meeting and launch to express opposition to the Statement's reference to the separation of Church and state, arguing that New Zealand should, in fact, be a Christian state. Some representatives of Destiny Church and the Exclusive Brethren had also appeared at the February Interfaith Forum to voice their opposition. They were given a polite hearing and, ironically for them, experienced a measure of that tolerance and acceptance which inheres to the secular context of religious diversity to which they were objecting.

In existence now for a few years, the Statement may not be as well or as widely known as it should be, but it is readily available via internet sources and well referenced in respect to ongoing interfaith activities and resources (see Human Rights Commission, 2012). There is arguably a work of promotion and education that is yet to take place, although an interesting recent development is the inception of a new organisation, The Religious Diversity Centre in Aotearoa New Zealand, to be officially launched in early 2016. The Trust backing this new development has as its first aim that of providing "high quality research and educational resources on religious diversity" and references in its Trust Deed the Statement on Religious Diversity.

9. Engaging Religious Diversity

Along with the Statement, its reception, on-going influence, and use as a document of reference, there have been a number of other relevant initiatives and activities worth noting as they exemplify the affirmation of religious diversity within a context of social inclusion.

The Human Rights Commission (HRC) carries out many statutory functions as well as exercising initiative in promoting the greater good. Among the latter is its work in facilitating a national interfaith network, producing a monthly electronic interfaith newsletter, and its facilitating of the development of the Statement on Religious Diversity in the first place. In 2007, the Com-

missioner, Joris de Bres, observed that although an arm of secular government,

> "The primary functions of the Commission under the Human Rights Act are to promote respect for human rights, and to encourage the maintenance and development of harmonious relationships between the diverse groups that make up New Zealand society. No other public agency has such a clear statutory mandate to promote the right to religion (including the right not to hold a religious belief), and to promote understanding between faith communities….This does not in any way compromise the secular nature of the Commission or the separation of church and state: the state has as much of a responsibility to engage with citizens who share a community of belief as they do with those who share a community of culture, ethnicity or geography." (de Bres, 2007, p. 9)

Together with promoting the Statement, the HRC publishes a monthly e-newsletter (*Te Korowai Whakapono*) which has to do with all sorts of religious diversity matters. The HRC is behind the New Zealand Diversity Action Programme of which an Interfaith Network is one of a number facilitated by the Commission. Each August the HRC organises a religious diversity forum within its larger annual New Zealand Diversity Forum. It also publishes, within the annual Race Relations Report, a review of religious diversity developments. The HRC has produced a range of relevant sundry publications and is active in dealing with discrimination complaints involving religion and belief. In general terms, the Commission promotes freedom of religion and belief and the harmonious relations between people of different beliefs in a context of growing religious diversity of New Zealanders, in large measure as a result of increased immigration from Asia and elsewhere. Furthermore, global tensions and the rise of Islamophobia since the terror attacks of 9/11, as well as subsequent terrorist events, have made of religion and religious diversity an important human rights issue in New Zealand. Significant attention has been paid to the Muslim community (Pratt, 2010a, 2011).

The Office of Ethnic Affairs of the New Zealand government is also active in the field of religious diversity and the promotion of interreligious and intercultural relations. It provides a focal point for the United Nations' *Alliance of Civilizations* programme. Given the close linking of ethnic and religious diversity that tends to take place, the Office works across a wide range of ethnic communities and religious organisations that overlap including, in particular, the Muslim community and *inter alia* the Federation of Islamic Associations of New Zealand. It has pursued with this community a 'Building Bridges' project and hosted events such as in 2013 'The Muslim World Forum'.

Other positive responses to the fact of religious diversity include, since 2003, the holding of a regular, almost annual, National Interfaith Forum. As noted above, it was at one of these (2007) that the Statement was endorsed prior to being officially launched. In the foreseeable future, a likely pattern will be a bi-annual national gathering with, in the alternate years, one or more regional interfaith events. Since the 1990s there has been a gradual development of Regional Interfaith Councils or Forums. Although there is no overarching national Interfaith Council as such, the loose networking between the regional groups seems to be proving effective and workable. Indeed, there is resistance to having energies channelled into the establishment and maintenance of any interfaith bureaucracy. In this context, the ongoing facilitative support of the HRC, and to a lesser extent the Office of Ethnic Affairs, is important. However, it does tend to reinforce a public perception that religious diversity is more a sub-set of ethnic diversity and Human Rights concerns as opposed being but one societal response as a direct affirmation of religious diversity as such.

There are also a number of active bilateral councils, some of which have been quite long-standing. These include, for the most part, Councils for Christians and Jews (CCJ) and Councils for Christians and Muslims (CCM). At times, such as in the major city of Auckland, these councils organise joint events and consultations. And various faith communities, including many of the Churches—notably Anglican, Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, and Methodist—also have their own interfaith committees and/or allied structures with an interfaith component. The ebb and flow of organisational energy and priority notwithstanding, interfaith engagement seems to becoming a more integrated aspect of many religious communities, as opposed to being a comparative fringe activity for enthusiasts. But even this assessment may be somewhat optimistic.

A number of legal measures have been put in place that recognize and support religious diversity. These include an amendment to the Holidays Act in 2010 to allow the transfer of public holidays, such as Christmas and Easter, to days of other personal religious or cultural significance and, in 2011, a review of immigration policy to better provide for the immigration of religious workers. A number of significant resources have also been forthcoming in recent times, including the New Zealand Police manual, *A Practical Reference to Religious Diversity* (2005/2009), among others, for example Pio (2014).

10. Conclusion

New Zealand is an ethnically, culturally and religiously diverse nation, and the depth and nature of that diversity is set to increase. Overall, the European population is declining as a relative proportion compared to the

increasing populations of Maori, Pacific Islanders, Asian and just about all other minor categories as well. The number and proportion of people at census time being recorded as having no religion looks set to increase. Significantly, since 2001 the total increase of those registering no religious affiliation has risen by almost 60%. It now comprises the largest single category after Christianity. And, as at 2013, the sum of all non-Christian religions combined is only about one third more than those who mark 'Object to answering' the question. It is clear the decline in the total Christian population is more a result of rising non-religious identity than it is a reflection of demographic changes wrought by immigration, although it is nevertheless true that among recent immigrants, especially from China, it is likely a good proportion profess no religious identity. In this context of changing demographics and increased religious diversification, the New Zealand Statement on Religious Diversity is both a beacon and a challenge. Only time will tell if the sentiments and hopes expressed therein result in lasting positive outcomes. But unless there is renewed effort to make good on the aspirational hopes and actions embedded in the Statement, such as in respect to Schools teaching "an understanding of different religious and spiritual traditions" for example—an aspiration that remains as red rag to a bull for many who confuse being secular with being non-religious—what time is likely to tell is the fading of a dream of true social inclusion in the face of religious apathy and rejection. Certainly it would seem since the demise of the Clark (Labour) government, the recent years of the Key (National) government displays much less interest in, let alone support of, interfaith matters and engagements within wider society, reflecting the default position of treating religion as an entirely private affair, not something that should concern the organs of state.

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Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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